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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000312

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS
LONDON FOR POL - RIEDEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/20/2013

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS MEET MAINSTREAM PARTY LEADERS IN
KATHMANDU

REF: A. (A) KATHMANDU 0292

[B](#). (B) KATHMANDU 0262

Classified By: AMB. MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Two members of the Maoist Central Committee have been meeting individual leaders of mainstream political parties in Kathmandu over the past few days to seek their support before negotiations with the Government of Nepal (GON). Party sources contacted have been noncommittal about the tenor of the meetings and continue to express skepticism of the Maoists' true aims. Narayan Singh Pun, Minister for Physical Planning and the GON's point man for communicating with the Maoists, told the Ambassador that he believes that international pressure was crucial in persuading the Maoists to agree to a ceasefire and contemplate formal peace negotiations. End summary.

MAOISTS MEET PARTY LEADERS IN OPEN

[1](#)2. (C) The local press has reported that Maoist Central Committee members Krishna Mahara and Dinanath Sharma have been holding a series of individual meetings with mainstream party leaders in Kathmandu since February 18. The pair also reportedly met with Padma Ratna Tuladhar, a putative human rights activist with close and long-standing covert links to the Maoists.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Nepali Congress (NC) General Secretary Sushil Koirala confirmed that NC President G.P. Koirala had met the pair on Feb. 18. He characterized the meeting as a first attempt by the Maoists to establish pre-dialogue lines of communication with the party. The NC continues to insist that Parliament must be reinstated as a first step toward any resolution of the "current crisis." Koirala was unable or unwilling to characterize any Maoist response to this position.

[1](#)4. (C) According to Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist-Leninist (UML) Central Committee Member Bharat Mohan Adhikari, the two Maoists met with UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal on Feb. 18 as well. Adhikari characterized the meeting as "interesting and useful," but added that it produced "nothing concrete" regarding Maoist demands or intentions. The pair had claimed to Nepal that the Maoists are not against multiparty democracy and realize that the parties must be included in a successful negotiation process. The Maoists want to have good relations with all the parties, they stated. This first meeting they described as an "opening" toward dialogue with the parties. The Maoists are not ignoring the parties by dealing with the Government of Nepal (GON), they emphasized; hence their desire to meet party leaders before sitting down formally with the GON. The two reportedly told the UML leader that "progress with the government is not running smoothly," but added that the insurgents will soon meet with the GON regarding a code of conduct for the ceasefire.

[1](#)5. (C) Adhikari said Nepal, in response to the pair's assertions about wanting good relations with the parties, complained about Maoist killings of UML activists, especially during the past year. The Maoists disingenuously disputed that their cadre had been killing UML members, and proposed setting up a "commission" to "inquire" into the incidents. The Maoists implied during the meeting that they no longer oppose the constitutional monarchy, Adhikari observed, although he cautioned that they did not say so explicitly. The Maoists also said nothing about whether they will insist on dealing with an all-party government instead of the current interim government appointed by the King, Adhikari reported, although such comments have been attributed to them in the media.

[1](#)6. (C) In the UML view, the party "cannot rely too much" on the Maoists' newly expressed support for multiparty democracy since their actions belie those claims. The party continues

to be suspicious of the insurgents' true aims in seeking dialogue, Adhikari stated, adding that any sincere effort toward dialogue must include the parties' participation.

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE KEY TO CEASEFIRE

17. (C) Narayan Singh Pun, Physical Planning Minister and GON point man for dealing with the Maoists, confirmed to the Ambassador Feb. 20 that he had "flown in" four Maoist leaders to Kathmandu on his helicopter. (Note: A former Army pilot, Pun now owns a private helicopter company. End note.) Pun cited four factors that he believes motivated the Maoists to agree to a ceasefire and consider negotiations. First, the counterinsurgency capability of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) has improved over the past year, resulting in a "balanced situation" between the sides. Second, international support for the GON (including USG security assistance and the possibility that the USG might place the Maoists on a terrorist list) had weakened the Maoists' position. Third, India had stepped up pressure on Maoists crossing its borders and residing in its territory. Fourth, the Maoists are experiencing significant difficulty in procuring new recruits, supplies, equipment, ammunition and food.

COMMENT

18. (C) The UML is prudent in suspecting the depth of the Maoists' near-overnight conversion to the virtues of multiparty democracy; we have some of the same reservations. That said, the Maoists are meeting with the parties, even if only to offer perfunctory lip service to democracy. Based on what we have heard, the meetings seem short on substance, but may nonetheless salve the wounded pride of political leaders who feel increasingly left out in the cold by the Palace. While the political leaders may suspect the Maoists' motives, they will certainly welcome their attention and seek to keep open channels of communication. This could serve to muddy already murky waters for the Palace, which prides itself on maintaining a single line of contact with the Maoist leadership. The Palace, which also has frequently expressed its support for multiparty democracy, would be well advised to open more active dialogue with the major parties before sitting down to talks with the Maoists.

MALINOWSKI